

APPENDIX: English Translation of Excerpts from JP H11-198745

[0005] To achieve the above objects, the invention according to claim 1 is provided with first and second switch means (12, 13) on the left and right sides of a steering wheel, respectively, and an inhibited state, in which an input operation cannot be performed, is released when the first and second switch means (12, 13) are simultaneously operated.

[0006] Because the driver's hands are occupied when the driver simultaneously operates the first and second switch means (12, 13) provided on the steering wheel while driving, and because the driver thus cannot perform the input operation, the safety during driving the vehicle is secured even if the input-operation-inhibited state is released. At this time, a passenger, such as a front-seat passenger, can perform the input operation with good operability.

[0018] In such a state, when the driver turns on the drive compulsion release switches 12, 13 simultaneously, the determination at step 103 becomes YES. Then, the drive compulsion is released at step 102, and a signal is sent to control devices 4-9 to notify that the drive compulsion has been released. By doing so, the control device executing the display device 1 to display information at that time has recovered itself to a normal state in which input operations can be performed via the touch switch. In this case, the driver cannot perform the input operation using a touch switch because the driver is simultaneously operating the drive compulsion release switches 12, 13. However, if there is a front-seat passenger, the input operation of the touch switch can be achieved by the front-seat passenger. At this time, because the passenger need not operate the drive compulsion release switches 12, 13, the input operation can be performed with good operability.

[0019] In addition, conventionally, the driver can perform the input operation if the front-seat passenger presses a release button. However, as discussed above, under a condition in which the drive compulsion release switches 12, 14 must be operated simultaneously, the input

operation by the driver during driving the vehicle can be reliably inhibited because the driver's hands are occupied.

[0020] In the above-described embodiment, the drive compulsion release switches 12, 13 are provided on the left and right sides of the steering wheel 11, respectively, and the drive compulsion is released when the switches are simultaneously turned on. However, the right side drive compulsion release switch 13 may be provided at a place other than the steering wheel 11, such as a place at which a power window switch is provided. Moreover, instead of providing two drive compulsion release switches 12, 13, only the drive compulsion release switch 12 may be provided only on the left side of the steering wheel 11 as shown in Fig. 5. In this case, when the driver turns on the drive compulsion release switch 12 provided on the left side of the steering wheel 11 by his/her left hand, the touch switch cannot be operated by his/her right hand. Therefore, the input operation by the driver can be reliably inhibited. Furthermore, if only one drive compulsion release switch is provided as discussed above, the drive compulsion release switch may be provided at a position at which a power window switch is provided as discussed above. In short, the drive compulsion release switch can be provided at a position where the driver can manually operate it and where the driver cannot operate the touch switch while controlling the steering wheel 11 during the manual operation.

[0024] In addition, according to the above-described embodiments, other than the example shown in Fig. 5, both of the driver's hands are basically occupied when operating the driver compulsion release switches. Therefore, other than the touch switch on the screen or switches provided above and below the display frame, a remote controller separate from the display device (a controller for remotely controlling the device) may be used. Moreover, in the above-described embodiment, the control unit 2 is provided integrally with the display device 1, and thus, the control unit 2 is positioned near the display device 1. However, the control unit 2 may be provided separately but near the display device 1.